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ABSTRACT

Resources available to department chairs from the following sources are described: the department's discipline; the national higher education community; the local institution; and the chair's own skills, background, roles, and structural placement within the organization. The use of these resources to deal with common problems faced by chairs is also addressed. Resources arising from the department's discipline include accreditation procedures, standards for curriculum and staffing, consulting services, workshops, specialized publications, and colloquium visitors or other faculty exchanges. The national higher education community offers specialized training for chairs and publishes journals and resource materials. Institutional resources such as the archives, administrative reports, and database access form an important part of the strategic resources of the chair. Institutional information can provide the context for funding requests as well as data to document specific needs. These resources, and the personal leadership of the chair, can be used to enhance departmental productivity, educational service delivery, and planning and resource availability. (SW)

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# RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO DEPARTMENT CHAIRS

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This paper argues that chairs have many resources with which to achieve departmental goals, including those arising from the department's discipline; the national higher education community; the chair's own skills, background, role and structural placement within the organization; and the local institution. Examples are included to show how these resources can be brought to bear on a number of problems commonly faced by chairs.

## Introduction

Department chairs are under pressure from many constituencies to enhance departmental productivity, educational service delivery, resource availability, and working conditions at the same time. Some chairs may feel like throwing up their hands in frustration and resigning, believing that they can never make headway on these diverse goals with the limited resources at hand. We argue in this paper that chairs have many resources at their disposal with which to achieve departmental goals, and that a careful cataloging and utilization of all available resources would greatly enhance their effectiveness.

The paper will describe resources available to department chairs arising from the department's discipline; the national higher education community; the chair's own skills, background, roles and structural placement within the organization; and the local institution. We will conclude by showing how these resources can be brought to bear on a number of specific problems commonly faced by chairs.

## The Department's Discipline

Resources available to chairs arising from the department's discipline include accreditation procedures, standards for curriculum and staffing, consulting services, workshops at state, regional, and national meetings, specialized publications on teaching and other matters of great interest to departments, and colloqium visitors or other forms of faculty exchange.

External accrediting associations are charged with embodying the discipline's collective standards of quality and applying them to individual cases. Many professional disciplines have especially well established organizations with clearly developed standards related to the level of university resources required to secure or maintain accreditation. Periodic reaccreditation maintains disciplinary vigilance over the consistency of funding patterns. Among the resources usually reviewed by accrediting bodies are faculty complement (to assure a pedagogically sound student to faculty ratio), faculty quality, professional development funds to allow faculty to

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maintain disciplinary currency, funds for travel to professional meetings, and support for library acquisitions. The National League for Nursing, for example, requires a student to faculty ratio of 10 to 1 for clinical courses in undergraduate programs. The American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business suggests that accredited institutions provide one FTE faculty person for each 400 undergraduate credit hours taught during a semester. Education disciplines have accrediting agencies for individual programs, e.g. the American Psychological Association for educational psychology, as well as for programs collectively, e.g. the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education. Disciplines in the arts and sciences may also be served by accrediting bodies. The American Chemical Society, for example, has been extremely helpful to departments in institutions with limited resources, enabling them to successfully compete with other departments for the funding necessary to continue to offer an educational program of substantial quality.

When no accrediting body exists, disciplines may take the initiative to create one. Although relatively new organizations may lack the status of older more established groups, the value, for example, of being among the first programs in safety sciences to be accredited nationally by the American Society of Safety Engineers is unmistakable. Such a distinction would make the program more attractive to prospective students, more visible within the university, and higher on the list of institutional priorities for resource allocation. Standards not yet promulgated may also provide the chair with opportunities to measure the adequacy of resources. The Association for Computing Machinery and the Insititute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers Computer Society have for the last year discussed standards for accrediting computer science departments. An astute department chair seeking to increase departmental resources could work with the dean to create an institutional appreciation of the value of preparing now for the inevitable development and promulgation of new standards.

Other professional organizations, while not providing accreditation, do make suggestions about curriculum and staffing patterns that may arm the chair who is in competition for scarce resources. Although such organizations may not have as much perceived influence as accrediting bodies in such matters as budget, staffing, and faculty productivity, they do provide external standards for measuring internal achievement.

Consulting services are another resource available to department chairs through the department's discipline. Many professional organizations maintain a list of consultants available at a reasonable cost to their members. Program development, program evaluation, and faculty development are a few of the services available through disciplinary consultants. A program evaluator could be employed to assist in ongoing institutional evaluations or in an ad hoc evaluation designed to investigate the chair's perception of limited resources and consequent program deficiencies. Since the credibility of an external professional is ususally greater than that of a person of

similar credentials within the university, this resource should not be overlooked. Should the discipline's national organization not provide such services, the potential gains are such that the chair might carefully select a scholar of national repute who is unaffiliated with the professional organization to provide consultation, maintaining both credibility and impact.

Many disciplines provide workshops at state, regional, or national meetings which may be of value to department chairs. One need only reflect on the discussions of the status of geography departments during the past year to find an instructive example. Workshops provided by national disciplinary organizations cover such topics as the latest technical developments in the field, opportunities for the acquisition of external funding, new developments in accreditation standards and federal regulations, and techniques and strategies for the successful chairing of departments.

Some professional associations balance their publications on matters of disciplinary expertise, such as professional journals and monographs, with a series of publications that have administrative value to department chairs. A pioneer in this area is the American Sociological Association, which in 1976 opened its Teaching Resources Center. The current catalog of the TRC lists four bibliographies, seven career information materials, ten publications on classroom techniques, four on curriculum, eight on departmental management, three journal subsciptions, and extensive sets of syllabi for 27 different courses. The TRC also offers workshops and a network of over 40 trained consultants to provide direct services to department chairs and faculty members.

Colloqium visitors or other forms of faculty exchange can serve most directly as resources to invigorate both faculty and students on academic matters outside the expertise of departmental faculty. Enriching interaction with colloqium visitors can also provide divergent perspectives on curriculum, advice on internships, placement strategies, and approaches to departmental marketing. These are matters that are tangential to the exchange but important to the growth and vitality of a department.

## The National Higher Education Community

The national higher education community offers specialized training on chairing and on specific departmental problems. Publications such as Change, the Chronicle of Higher Education, the AAUP Bulletin, the ETS Journal Monitor, Exchange, various teaching journals, and many of the series published by Jossey-Bass often include resource information that is useful to chairs. The Jossey-Bass series on college learning assistance, community colleges, higher education, institutional research, and teaching and learning are particularly useful to department chairs. The ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education and the Association for the Study of Higher Education jointly publish a series of Higher Education Research Reports, and other Washington D.C.- based education associations such as the Association of American Colleges and the American Council on

Education also issue monographs of great value to deparment chairs. The latter organization is also well known for its administrative workshops, some of which are designed for department chairs.

Comparative information from the discipline and other higher education sources is part of nearly every strong request for significant additional funding. Approaches may be found to increase faculty productivity in teaching, research and service, fund faculty development activities, develop the curriculum and the co-curriculum (those credit and non-credit educational experiences which occur outside the traditional classroom setting), improve and communicate the department's image, place graduates in careers or professional and graduate schools, maintain relationships with alumni, employ part-time faculty to increase faculty size, increase the number of full-time faculty and staff, and expand the departmental budget. Requests for increased levels of financial support for graduate students, for example, would be strengthened by data indicating that, for institutions of similar size and mission throughout the country, assistantship stipends and the percentage of students receiving support is considerably higher than that available in the chair's department.

## The Chair's Own Skills, Background, Roles, and Structural Placement within the Organization

The social psychological power of initiative, preparation, organization and determination, when combined with the intellectual background of chairs produces formidable departmental advocates. The structural placement of chairs between faculty and management allows chairs to influence these groups' view of each other for the benefit of the department.

Generally, we recommend that chairs adopt a rational comprehensive approach to identifying needs and developing plans to address those needs and an incremental approach to securing resources. Developing a comprehensive departmental data base together with long and short-range plans provides a context for requesting resources. The chair's flexibilty in considering alternative approaches to the same problem together with potential costs and benefits may allow administrators to use existing extra-departmental budgets to fund activites not considered when the budgets were developed. Seeking institutional funding on a piecemeal basis promotes progress toward long-term goals, provided, of course, that the chair identifies those parts as components of a larger whole. Determined chairs can also develop strategies that creatively combine various institutional funding sources with external sources (government grants, private fund raising, contributions in kind).

## The Local Institution

Institutional resources such as the archives, administrative reports, data base access via the office of institutional research, the official and unofficial powers of the chair (however defined and constituted), and departmental records form an important part of the strategic resources of every chair. Institutional information can provide the context for requests for funding as well as data to document specific needs. Knowing the university's short and long-term plans, from general mission statements to goals and objectives, provides the framework for departmental planning and establishing a departmental identity. Clear statements of unit mission, goals, and objectives, their evolution over time, the underlying rationale and need for programs, the size and makeup of the faculty, student body, and alumni will establish a framework for discussing departmental needs. Selective comparisions with similar departments within the university may illustrate the comparative resource disadvantage.

Political alliances with other departments, the council of chairs, the dean or specialized faculty, student, alumni and community interest groups are part of the available informal set of resources. The broad goal here is to shape perceptions so that the department is believed to be essential, or at least important, to the institution's mission. Both formal and informal methods should be used to routinely communicate the department's successes and needs to various constituencies. Establishing methods for approaching all constituencies simultaneously, e.g. a periodic newsletter, can help routinize communication and limit the amount of work involved. Consultation with these diverse groups will not only refine ideas but also help shape needs statements to be most acceptable to institutional decision-makers. Knowing, for example, the dean's goals and biases would allow a chair to link selected needs to administrative predispositions. Success in utilizing initial resource investments will facilitate later decisions. In sum, strategic plans to achieve each goal should enlist the support of appropriate constituencies.

## Problem Resolution

In this section, we will show how the resources described above can be brought to bear on a number of specific problems commonly faced by chairs, including enhancing departmental productivity, educational service delivery, planning and resource availability.

1. Enhancing departmental productivity in the areas of teaching, research, and public service is supported by many traditional peer review processes (tenure, promotion, merit pay) in which the chair may be involved by virtue of the institutional definition of his or her role. The discipline and sometimes an accrediting agency provide the perspective from which the chair may make these crucial judgements about the careers of colleagues. Active support of departmental faculty to develop professionally can be linked to these decision

points. Motivating senior tenured faculty may be more difficult as peer review processes are employed infrequently, if at all. Providing support for travel to professional meetings, released time for research, and appointments to significant departmental committees may stimulate increased productivity.

2. Improving educational service delivery should be part of an ongoing effort to improve the curriculum and the co-curriculum. Developing a comprehensive data base describing the development and present status of the department will also be useful in planning for improvements and in supporting requests for additional resources. The types of information needed can be determined at a number of levels, including standards provided by accrediting bodies, other professional organizations, and the literature, as well as the criteria used within the university (both formally and informally) to evaluate programs and allocate resources. Many of the information needs identified can be met by faculty: for example, a history of the department and its evolution; faculty successes in teaching, research, and service; career development and graduate and professional school placement of alumni; internship placements; faculty exchanges and colloquia; equipment acquisition; frequency of course offerings; and departmental courses which are part of general education requirements or other major programs. Other institutional sources can provide more quantitative historical data. Institutional research offices usually maintain records depicting the number of majors enrolled in service courses and the number of program graduates, while the financial aid office can provide information about the level of aid supplied to students. A chair who knows the history and current status of the department has a comparative advantage over others who are not so well equipped in terms of planning and resource acquisition.

3. The context for stimulating discussion about additional resources may be a departmental plan which deals with the departmental mission, long and short-term goals, activities designed to achieve those goals, creative uses of existing resources, and unmet needs. The chair's task is less difficult if the university already has an on-going planning process. In the absence of institutional planning, the department should develop its own in an attempt to legitimate its needs. Planning, however informal, is probably underway in other departments whose experience may prove useful. Discussions of the status of the department and its programs should be stimulated by a comprehensive data base. A skillful chair will attempt to establish some measure of concensus among the faculty about long and short-term goals and perhaps assign the development of specific strategies for achieving goals to faculty task groups. The aim is to develop faculty ownership of the plan so that the department can speak to administrators and other influential publics with one voice. Linking the plan to external standards and the informal goals and biases of administrators will establish additional legitimacy.

4. Securing additional human, fiscal, and physical resources is probably the most compelling problem faced by chairs. Approaches to resource acquisition are supported by some of the strategies described earlier, i.e. a data base describes the department and the plan

reflects resource needs within the context of program expansions or refinements. Once these building blocks are in place, however, the chair's skills and the strategies he or she employs are very important. Since resources tend to go to programs that are good or excellent, chairs might argue that the quality of departmental programs is already good and that funding both short and long-term plans will achieve excellence. The impression of departmental quality can be reinforced, for example, by consistently publicizing faculty achievements in teaching, research, and service.

Incremental approaches to resource acquisition can also be employed. A department that attempts to secure external funding from either the private or public sectors may not only demonstrate good faith but also be more successful in securing partial institutional funding. Administrators may be more likely to provide support for the final component of a project than to provide total support for the project.

## Summary

In this paper, we have described resources available to department chairs in fulfilling their responsibilities. We have argued that chairs can achieve a measure of success by cataloging and utilizing resources arising from the department's discipline; the national higher education community; the chair's own skills, background, roles and structural placement within the organization; and the local institution. Lastly, applications of these resources to examples of specific problems commonly faced by chairs have been considered.

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